

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 350 564

CS 011 041

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TITLE The Newspaper in Education Program: Types of Activities and Later Reading Habits.
PUB DATE Aug 92
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (75th, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, August 5-8, 1992).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Analysis of Variance; *Class Activities; Elementary Secondary Education; *Newspapers; Program Effectiveness; *Reading Habits; Reading Research; Telephone Surveys
IDENTIFIERS *Newspaper in Education Program

ABSTRACT

A study compared types of activities associated with the Newspaper in Education (NIE) program with current newspaper reading habits through a survey of 263 respondents under the age of 40 who took part in an NIE program during their school days. Results of the telephone survey indicated that participation in NIE and length of participation were significantly related to later frequency of reading. Results also indicated that four of six other activities were also related to high newspaper use: that respondents took current events quizzes, clipped and saved articles, used the newspaper as a source of class discussion, and analyzed news stories. (One table of data is included.) (Author/RS)

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Types of Activities and Later Reading Habits

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**Paper presented to the Secondary Education Division at the
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass
Communication annual conference, Montreal, 1992.

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The Newspaper in Education Program:
Types of Activities and Later Reading Habits

Abstract

Types of activities associated with the Newspaper in Education program were compared with newspaper reading habits through a survey of respondents under the age of 40. Participation in NIE and length of participation were significantly related to later frequency of reading. Four of six other activities also were related to high newspaper use: whether respondents took current events quizzes, clipped and saved articles, used the newspapers as a source of class discussion, and analyzed news stories.

The Newspaper in Education Program:
Types of Activities and Later Reading Habits

In 1952, the circulation manager at the Des Moines Register became concerned about the impact television was having on reducing newspaper reading nationwide. C. Ken Jefferson, with the help of the International Circulation Managers Association, initiated a program designed to encourage future readership by providing schools with newspapers to distributed to their students. Thus, the Newspaper In Education program was born.

In the 40 years since, the program has grown to include more than 62,000 teachers and 2 million students in almost 26,000 schools. The overall effectiveness of the NIE program in cultivating a reading habit of participants later in life, however, has not been convincingly demonstrated (Stone, 1988).

The Newspaper In Education program, nonetheless, has received high marks from educators, journalists, students and parents alike (NAB, 1980). Few attempts, however, have been made to examine the activities in which the students in the program take part. Logically, different activities should lead to different levels of effectiveness. The types of programs the newspapers are used for in the classroom, then, should be an important factor contributing to the likelihood of newspapers reading at a later time.

This study, based on data from a survey of respondents 40 years old and younger, will examine eight activities that

students could take part in inside the classroom and that also could vary in effectiveness of cultivating a later reading habit. The variables examined here are: 1. whether respondents participated in any Newspaper In Education program; 2. the length of participation; 3. whether students analyzed news stories; 4. whether they clipped and saved articles; 5. whether they took current event quizzes; 6. whether the newspapers were used as a source of class discussion; 7. whether students took time out in class to read the newspapers; and 8. whether students only had the newspapers delivered to them in the classroom.

The American Newspaper Publishers Association currently provides participating papers with suggestions for incorporating newspapers in the classroom. However, a survey by the ANPA Foundation (1981) found that one-fourth of all newspapers did not provide any instructional materials to participating schools. Moreover, the other 75 percent that did provide curriculum materials have never been assured that any activity associated with the Newspaper In Education program is effective. The results here, then, may offer some much needed guidelines regarding the types of activities that should be emphasized by educators and newspapers participating in the NIE program.

The Newspaper In Education program

The beginnings of the Newspaper in Education program can be traced to the 1950s, according to the American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation.¹ Prior to the mid-

1950s, the New York Times was the only newspaper in the country that regularly participated in any sort of program linked to classroom use of newspapers.

In 1952, however, C. Ken Jefferson, the circulation manager of the Des Moines Register, concerned about the impact of television, envisioned a future in which newspapers would no longer be an everyday part of American homes. In an effort to stem the probable attrition, Jefferson sought help from other newspaper workers and educators. The International Circulation Managers Association sponsored summer workshops at universities for teachers to learn how to effectively use newspapers in their teaching. The program was called Newspapers in the Classroom. In 1958, the American Newspaper Publishers Association became the national sponsor of the program.

In 1976, the name was changed to Newspaper In Education. The program continues to function under the auspices of the American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation.

The program grew quickly during its infancy in the early 1960s. Local newspapers sponsored the programs in their communities, providing the newspapers at little or no cost.

The ANPA continued its role by providing educational opportunities for teachers through national workshops. About 100 teachers attend each year.

Teacher guidelines were developed by the ANPA for newspapers to use as a promotional tool. The ANPA also

recruited publishers and provided expert advice on setting up local programs.

During the 1970s, the ANPA expanded its curriculum materials so the newspaper could be used on a continuing basis rather than as a two-week special unit. Individual newspapers began their own workshops and promotion of the program.

In the last 20 years, most of the newspapers have raised their prices. Most charge about half the normal price, and the newspaper is still viewed as a valuable text. Many schools have purchase arrangements or corporate sponsorship that will pick up much of the cost.

The ANPA Foundation now acts primarily as an advisor and clearinghouse. Newspapers are encouraged to manage their own programs with emphasis on the right program being the one that fits best in the community.

The Foundation continues to sponsor an annual conference for NIE program development. The first conference was held in 1973. In 1990, more than 400 teachers and newspaper staff members participated.

The program can be found in classrooms from kindergarten to college dealing with subjects from social science to math. The most recent new use of the program is to help immigrants become acculturated. Many literacy programs also use information and materials from the NIE to help adults learn to read.

Previous research

Research involving the Newspaper In Education program occurred most frequently during the 1970s, perhaps due to requests from school administrators and ANPA officials for empirical evidence indicating that the program reached the goals outlined for students.

Two major studies conducted by the Newspaper Advertising Bureau (NAB, 1977; NAB, 1978) found that the Newspaper In Education program can provide many of the prerequisites for later adult newspaper reading.

One of the NAB surveys (NAB, 1977) found that while having a newspaper in the home as a child is one of the strongest predictors of newspaper reading later in life, receiving the newspaper in the classroom can substitute in some respects for not having one at home.

The NAB survey also found that individuals exposed to newspapers in the classroom enjoy reading newspapers more than those who have not been exposed. NIE participants also say they have less trouble reading newspapers, enjoy "hard" news more and are more politically conscious and more aware of public issues than non-NIE participants.

Stone (1988), however, cited a number of methodological problems with the NAB projects, including a problem with the NIE participation question. He called for a large heterogeneous sample of adults in their 30s to examine NIE influence -- which is the purpose of the present study.

The Newspaper In Education program also can have an immediate impact on students' classroom development. DeRouche (1991) notes that newspaper use improves the quality of students' verbal interactions in the classroom and students' reading achievement, particularly vocabulary development and comprehension.

Because of the apparent positive effects on the students who participate, the NIE program has received widespread support. An NAB project (NAB, 1980) found that school principals reported the NIE improved educational opportunities for students. Parents also supported the NIE and reported instances of positive pupil response in their homes. In addition, most teachers who participated in the NIE program saw it as worthwhile and of benefit to students.

Finally, Rhoades (1982) found some support for NIE participation cultivating a later reading habit. He sampled college students regarding their past participation in Newspaper In Education program and their current newspaper reading habits. He found that students who recalled participating in an NIE program spent more time reading the newspaper, spent more time on the average each day reading news from all major news media, spent more time acquiring news and had greater interest in news than non-NIE participants.

Method

A telephone survey was conducted in mid-November 1991 in Jackson County, Illinois. The survey dealt with a number of

topics involving newspaper readership, including respondents' participation in Newspaper In Education programs.

The area surveyed has a population of about 50,000 and a wide range of residents, from coal miners and farmers to university professors. The area also has a large number of young residents, which was essential for the present study.

Residents were randomly selected from the area to take part in the study using a form of random digit dialing. The first four digits were randomly selected from the area telephone directory. This method ensured that local exchanges were included. Including the fourth digit increased the likelihood that working phone numbers would be included. The final three digits then were randomly selected.

Interviewers were students at Southern Illinois University. All went through a training session before interviewing began. The process yielded 378 completed surveys.

Of the 378 respondents taking part in the survey, only respondents under the age of 40 were asked about their participation in Newspaper in Education programs. The age 40 was used as a cutoff point for three reasons. First, the Newspaper in Education program, though initiated in 1952, has enjoyed wide participation nationwide only since the early 1960s, meaning respondents older than 48 years old could not have participated. Indeed, the ANPA Foundation reported that in 1981, the average NIE program was five years old (ANPA Foundation and INPA, 1981). Second, Stone (1988) argues that

NIE's development may have taken 15 years, thus placing the maturation into its current form at about 1967. Third, it was felt that respondents over the age of 40 would have difficulty remembering specific programs they took part in during their school days -- more than two decades earlier. A total of 235 respondents were under the age of 40 and thus were included in the NIE survey.

Respondents first were asked "Do you remember being in a program in high school or earlier where the newspaper was actually brought into class for the pupils to read and made part of the regular classroom program?" This question also was used by Windhauser and Stone (1981) and Stone and Wetherington (1979). If they answered "yes," the respondents were asked a series of questions dealing with length of participation and types of activities in which they might have participated. Respondents who answered "no" or "did not remember" were grouped in a "did not participate" category for each of the subsequent activities questions.

To determine the length of participation, respondents were asked: "Do you recall how long you received the newspapers. Did you received them one week; longer than one week but less than one month; longer than one month, but less than three months; longer than three months but less than six months; or longer than six months."

To determine the activities respondents took part in, they were asked: "Different schools used newspapers in the classrooms in different ways. I will read you a list of

activities some students in the past have taken part in with the newspapers. Tell us yes, no, or you don't remember if you did the following when you received the newspapers in the classroom. Did you: analyze news stories or any of the newspapers' contents; clip and save news stories or any other contents; take current events quizzes based on newspaper stories; use the newspapers as a source for class discussions; take time out in class to read the newspapers; or only have the newspapers delivered in class."

Frequency of newspaper use was determined by responses to a question that asked "How many days in a typical week do you read a newspaper?"

A series of analysis of variance tests examined if the group of individuals who responded "yes" to each of the questions dealing with classroom activities typically read the newspaper more than the group of individuals who responded "no" or "did not remember" to each of the same questions.

An important limitation should be noted. The methodology used here forced respondents to rely on their memory of activities they might have taken part in years earlier. Some respondents, quite expectedly, could not remember specific activities. This would make the statistical tests more conservative, since these respondents would have been grouped in the "did not participate" category. Statistical significance, then, should be more difficult to attain because some individuals who did

participate in some of the activities would be grouped with the individuals who did not, thus possibly inflating the reading-level responses of the non-participants group -- if the variable categories did indeed lead to increased newspaper usage. The problem of memory recall, however, was somewhat lessened by eliminating all respondents over the age of 40.

Results

Six of the eight independent variables produced statistically significant analysis of variance F-scores. Table 1 lists the F-scores and levels of significance for all eight independent variables.

First, participation in a Newspaper in Education program was related to higher levels of newspaper reading ($F = 4.895$, $p = .008$). In other words, if respondents stated they participated in a program in which newspapers were used in the classroom, they were more likely to be frequent newspaper readers.

Second, length of participation in an NIE program led to higher levels of newspaper reading ($F = 5.228$, $p = .000$). The longer respondents stated they received newspapers in the classroom, the more likely they were to be frequent newspaper readers.

Third, required current events quizzes was related to higher levels of newspaper reading ($F = 6.906$, $p = .009$). If respondents stated they took current events quizzes based on

articles in the newspapers, they were more likely to be frequent newspaper readers.

Fourth, clipping and saving articles led to higher levels of newspaper reading ($F = 6.418$, $p = .012$). If respondents stated that they were required to clip and save articles for assignments in classes, they were more likely to be frequent newspaper readers.

Fifth, use of the newspapers as a source for class discussion was related to higher levels of newspaper reading ($F = 5.624$, $p = .019$). If respondents stated they discussed in class articles that they read, they were more likely to be frequent newspaper readers.

Finally, analyzing content in the newspapers led to higher levels of newspaper reading ($F = 4.493$, $p = .035$). If respondents stated they were required to analyze news stories and other contents of the newspapers, they were more likely to be frequent newspaper readers.

The two other variables did not produce statistically significant results with frequency of newspaper reading. Whether respondents took time out in class to read the papers or only had papers delivered were not related to their reading habits later in life.

Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to examine possible activities within the Newspaper in Education program which could potentially lead to increased newspaper readership later in life. Of the eight activities included in this

survey, six produced statistically significant results, suggesting that some activities may serve to help cultivate a newspaper reading habit more than others.

Of the six significant ANOVAs, two dealt with overall participation rather than specific activities. Whether respondents took part in a Newspaper In Education program and how long respondents participated were directly related to later frequency of reading. These two findings suggest that the NIE program is successful in luring readers into the newspaper reading habit, especially if students take part in the program over an entire semester or longer.

As expected, not all activities associated with NIE programs were equally effective. Specifically, four activities were related to higher reading frequency: taking current events quizzes, clipping and saving articles, discussing articles in class and analyzing newspaper contents. It should be noted that these activities deal with high involvement between the students, teachers and newspapers.

The two activities that were not related to higher reading levels also point to the need for high involvement of the classroom instructor. These involved very passive activities -- only having the papers delivered in class and taking time out in class to read them.

Taken one step further, the findings suggest that merely delivering the newspapers to students is not an effective means of attracting future readers. If students have a

specific purpose for reading the newspapers -- i.e. class requirements -- this early reading may translate into higher frequency of reading later in life. Cooperation from the high school instructors, however, appears to be imperative.

Overall, then, the results here point to two suggestions for instructors participating in the Newspaper in Education program interested in cultivating future newspaper reading habits within their students.

First, high school instructors participating in the program should attempt to get their students involved in newspaper reading by placing on them specific requirements, such as quizzes or classroom discussion participation. The higher the level of involvement, the more likely students will form a newspaper reading habit that will continue later in life. Passive activities, such as allowing time in class to read the papers or simply handing out the papers to students, are ineffective at cultivating future readers.

Second, since class discussion, current events quizzes and clipping and saving articles appear to cultivate a reading habit, perhaps the type of class associated with the Newspaper In Education program is an important factor. Perhaps the NIE program should be incorporated into high school civics or political science classes, where activities such as quizzes on current events and class discussion of the news would be most appropriate. The NIE program currently offers suggestions for activities to instructors in a wide range of classes -- from social sciences and government to

English and even math. Classes involving discussion of current events appear to be especially fruitful areas of emphasis for the NIE program.

Overall, then, the findings point to the effectiveness of the Newspaper In Education program. However, the type of activities associated with the program also appears to be an important consideration.

Footnote

¹
Additional information on the history of the NIE can be found in "An Informal History and Purpose of the Newspaper In Education Program," produced by the American Newspaper Publishers Association.

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Table 1. Analysis of variance results for tests of the influence of independent variables on frequency of newspaper reading.

Variable	F-score	Sign.
Participation in NIE program	4.895	.008
Length of participation	5.228	.000
Took current events quizzes	6.906	.009
Clipped and saved articles	6.418	.012
Used as source of class discussion	5.624	.019
Analyzed news stories	4.493	.035
Only had papers delivered	1.006	.317
Took time out in class to read	.066	.798